## INVESTIGATION OF THE S. V. RACHMANINOV'S COMPOSITIONS OF SMALL FORMS (HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS)

# INVESTIGAÇÃO DAS COMPOSIÇÕES DE PEQUENAS FORMAS DE S. V. RACHMANINOV (ANÁLISE HERMENÊUTICA)

INVESTIGACIÓN DE LAS COMPOSICIONES DE PEQUEÑAS FORMAS DE S. V. RACHMANINOV (ANÁLISIS HERMENÉUTICO)

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ABSTRACT: Training a musician at the modern level of development of performance art requires the search for new forms and means for analyzing the musical text to understand and interpret it adequately. The texts of works of small forms by S. Rachmaninov in which the waltz elements play a unique role as a manifestation of polysemantic in the work structure and the originality of the author's manner of a composer are involved for the analysis. This paper aims to show the possibility of finding a fundamental way of forming a musician's performing culture through comprehension of some pages of the composer's work, using the method of hermeneutic analysis. The study shed a clearer light on some new, previously unnoticed by researchers, features of the composer's work and recalled the students' attention to a more thorough analysis of the musical text.

**KEYWORDS:** Musical hermeneutics. Hermeneutic analysis. Musical text. Students.

**RESUMO**: A formação de um músico no nível moderno de desenvolvimento da arte performática exige a busca de novas formas e meios de analisar o texto musical para compreendê-lo e interpretá-lo adequadamente. Os textos de obras de pequenas formas de S. Rachmaninov em que os elementos da valsa desempenham um papel único como manifestação da polissemântica na estrutura da obra e a originalidade do jeito de compositor do autor estão envolvidos na análise. Este artigo visa mostrar a possibilidade de encontrar um caminho fundamental para a formação da cultura performática de um músico através da compreensão de algumas páginas da obra do compositor, utilizando o método de análise hermenêutica. O estudo lançou uma luz mais clara sobre algumas novidades, até então despercebidas pelos

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pesquisadores, características da obra do compositor e chamou a atenção dos alunos para uma análise mais aprofundada do texto musical.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Hermenêutica musical. Análise hermenêutica. Texto musical. Alunos.

RESUMEN: La formación de un músico en el nivel moderno de desarrollo de las artes escénicas requiere la búsqueda de nuevas formas y medios de análisis del texto musical para comprenderlo e interpretarlo adecuadamente. Los textos de las obras de formas pequeñas de S. Rachmaninov en las que los elementos del vals juegan un papel único como manifestación de la polisemántica en la estructura de la obra y la originalidad de la forma del autor del compositor están involucrados para el análisis. Este artículo tiene como objetivo mostrar la posibilidad de encontrar una forma fundamental de formar la cultura interpretativa de un músico a través de la comprensión de algunas páginas de la obra del compositor, utilizando el método de análisis hermenéutico. El estudio arrojó una luz más clara sobre algunas características nuevas, previamente desapercibidas por los investigadores, del trabajo del compositor y llamó la atención de los estudiantes a un análisis más completo del texto musical.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Hermenéutica musical. Análisis hermenéutico. Texto musical. Alumnos.

#### Introduction

Rachmaninov as a composer and a performer has a special place in the history of Russian and world music.

As noted by V. V. Medushevsky in one of the conversations, it is not likely to find a composer "brighter, more poignant, unique, recognizable, national, highly appreciated more and more with every passing year, with every research about him, being outside of styles, trends and schools, a symbol of the era, not responding to fashion, nor newly invented rules" (MEDUSHEVSKY, 2005). Medushevsky recalled the words of Japanese pianist Sadakatsu Tsuchida that "all Bach, Beethoven, Chopin together" were in Rachmaninov (MEDUSHEVSKY, 2005).

A lot of authoritative studies have been written about Rachmaninov. There are attempts to understand his work by analyzing each period, each step of his life (NIKITIN, 2008), to understand it from the point of view of the most astute professional observations (KHANNANOV, 2011), as is done in the musical-theoretical studies by I. D. Hannanov. In his other works dedicated to the composer, it is noted that S. Rachmaninov's compositions contain the symbols (topics) of flowers, bells, spills, that the melodies are distinguished by frequent and unpredictable turns.

The researchers also noted the "poly-stylisticity" and appreciable "auto-citationality" of the composer's works (LYAKHOVICH, n./d.), the presence of well-known symbols (the ringing of bells, the Dies Irae motif etc.).

However, Rachmaninov remains an understudied genius, not entirely explored and not fully mastered by practicing musicians and theoretists, as well as educators who teach a future performer to see, feel the composer's style, interpret his works at a high level of musical culture, which requires sensitivity to the minute details of the author's text.

The hermeneutic analysis of the texts of his works allows a musician to reveal new aspects of the composer's creative manner. For this, the performer must possess hermeneutic competence, which provides with the tools of hermeneutic analysis (NOVIKOVA; PETELIN, 2019).

## **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Hermeneutics is a method of understanding, interpretation, that implies "the ability to make any meaningful message understood" (SHULGA, 2002), this is a procedure for revealing the "real meaning" (SHULGA, 2002), "the art of conveying and interpreting latent content" (SHULGA, 2002). So, E. N. Shulga defines the concept and tasks of *cognitive hermeneutics*, hermeneutics of the mind, philosophical hermeneutics.

Musical hermeneutics, which emerged early in the 20th century in the works by G. Krechmar, developed in the works by S. Belyaeva-Exemlyarskaya, A. Schweitzer, A. Shering, K. Dalhaus, A. Blagaya, A. Trifonov, S. Filippov, T. Cherednichenko and others, has become an urgent area of research for both the composer and the performer, and (especially) the music scholar.

Musical hermeneutics requires "absorbed listening" (BONFELD, 2021), we would add "sensitivity", since we can agree that talking about a direct understanding of music without attracting feelings is hardly possible. Musical hermeneutics is, according to M. Bonfeld, a special area of "mastering the art of music", designed to "oust the space of misunderstanding", this is a new "area of familiarization with music" (BONFELD, 2021). By using it, the problem of understanding and interpreting musical texts is solved.

As applied to music, this is an understanding of the entire complex of sounds presented on the musical staff, sound combinations, musical phrases, the entire work, and the definition of the role of each unit in a complex musical whole. That is, this is following on the "hermeneutic circle" proposed at the time by Schleiermacher.

As stressed by V. N. Kholopova, the founder of musical hermeneutics, G. Kretschmar "believed that the entire musical form, starting with an interval, motif, theme, comes from a certain predetermined affect" (KHOLOPOVA, 2014) that the meaning of a piece of music requires an explanation of its meaning and the achievement of understanding.

A scrupulous hermeneutic analysis makes it possible to find and reveal unexplored and still not understood moments in a piece of music.

Musical hermeneutics is the hermeneutics of cognition of works of musical art, the hermeneutics of artistic musical creativity. This entitles us to speak of *creative hermeneutics*, the hermeneutics of a creator: the creator of the work, the performer-interpreter, the listener/viewer who perceives this work and tries to understand and accept it, find an adequate place for it in their own consciousness and memory, the music scholar who analyses the work, "verifies harmony with algebra". Hermeneutics equips a teacher with a tool that allows the future performer to reveal the secrets of the composer's revelations, expressed in sounds.

### Hermeneutic Analysis of S. V. Rachmaninov's Compositions of Small Forms

Let us consider the meaning of waltz inclusions in the structure of the culmination zones of the works by S. Rachmaninov from the point of view of *creative hermeneutics*.

The waltz is associated with beauty, love, natural tenderness, imperial chic, with important moments in life. In Russian music from waltzes by A. S. Griboyedov, A. N. Verstovsky, M. I. Glinka through the sentimental and pompous waltzes by P. I. Tchaikovsky, through his quintuple waltz psychologically built into the Sixth Symphony there is a line to Rachmaninov's waltz. The waltz as a dance in its purest form is unlikely in symphonic music, this is a kind of isolation of the genre original artwork. Rachmaninov's waltz is based on the kinetic activity of the thematic invention. Waltzes by F. Chopin, C. Debussy, M. Ravel, S. Prokofiev, D. Shostakovich are determined by the genre structure but can hardly be part of dance programs. The music of the above composers, called *The Waltz*, encourages the listener to search for the depth of human feeling, with self-perception and awareness of one's own place in this world. M. I. Glinka signified the formation of Russian culture with the waltz, and S. V. Rakhmaninov emerged during the mankind's global betrayal of faith, prayer and all spiritual and moral foundations of life. Rachmaninov's work is a voice of conscience for the world.

The waltz for Rachmaninov is an important factor of the existence of musical culture, with an urgently arising need for penetration into meaning, often encrypted, allegorical,

expressed in the language of music "about the essence of philosophical and existential order, about good and evil, life and death, God and the devil" (LYAKHOVICH, n./d.).

Rachmaninov's resort to the waltz rather veils than shows and tries to reveal the main content (concerning "the horror of a person before death", according to O. Sokolova, or the religious theme and the religious role of Russia in the world, according to V. Grachev).

It is a well-known fact that work on a miniature, according to N. K. Metner, "primary melodic material", is usually more labor-intensive and engrosses, it is easier to deal with a canvas or a symphonic composition, where timbres, textures and colors "work" for the image. In the instrumental, pianoforte miniature there is nothing to hide behind, the thematic idea should be condensed and without digressions, succinct, forcible.

Rachmaninov often includes the waltz into music texture of several compositions at the point of golden section in culmination zone. For example: Etude − Scene 8, Op. 39, (1917) vv. 87-92, Elegy, Op. 3, №1, vv. 63-70, Romantic Song "Fragment from Musset", Op.21, №6, vv. 24-28.

Etude – Scene 8, Op.39 in d-moll is based not so much on thematic invention but on the rhythmic-meditative triplet. It is difficult to say whether this is a melodic line or a harmonic "sliding", a melodic singing of the tonic or just an idea of movement. The waltz-like element: three-beat music with a meter that is difficult to define, in the left hand - dactyl, reflected to anapaest, in the right – anapaest, opposite to dactyl, reflected "back". According to Schnabel's expression, it "passes my comprehension." A quiet, calm theme, based on the singing of the tonic, then all the steps down in its own order, grew out of intonations close to church ones, somewhat akin to a znamenny chant. Inner freedom and meekness in D minor are, according to St. John Climacus, "a protective edge in the ocean of everyday irritability" (MEDUSHEVSKY, 2005). There is liveliness, dimensionality, intelligence, and philosophicity in music, everything is built and calculated, there is no improvisation (how it may develop, where hands may fling, so we will write it down). It follows that the composer builds the form not in its standard schematic format, but for reasons of meaning, the internal content of the sound, the relationship of this content with the pitch and internal timbre-register relations between phrases, motifs, other constructions and parts of the form. Quite a long time, almost 86 measures - a multiplezone monolith, which led to the further introduction of the waltz into the texture. The logic of the emergence of sub-voices, multiple layering of texture, interval ratios, rhythm beating in strict three-beat "shackles", intonations of six, then seven-sound, that is, growing, overgrowing with new meanings and experiences at the beginning, built further on the principle of summation (v. 1-10, v. 29-40), or splitting the same thematic material (v. 72-80) is

understandable. They are embraced by the composer, depending on the expositional replicas, and they also determine both the waltz in measure 87 and the repeating thawing. Thus, all these interval, pitch, rhythm and texture components are also formative. There is no rest, there is excitement to varying degrees, beating in a three-beat rhythm to a two-beat (26-27 vv.), that is, two-syllable troche with dactyl in the accompaniment. And the very accompaniment switches to duoles (v. 23), keeping the triplet in a melodic part:

The texture is pianistic, no doubt, comfortable, it fits the fingers itself, and at the same time orchestral. Tutti measures 43-47 with a "beat-by-beat" change of orchestrating is at least four-part polyphony.

Polyphony is seven-part from bar 66; the truly orchestral density of bars 55-57 with almost sequential six-beat six-note chromatisms descending in the melody and ascending in the "tenor part" evokes reminiscences with the "sliding" chromatisms of the first measures of the part III of *Symphonic Dances*.

The culminating performance of both the theme and the accompaniment texture in bars 74-80, "straight" from the point of view of polyphony, makes it possible to state the monumentality of the symphonic sound in, in fact, a piano painting, etude, miniature. Rachmaninov relies perhaps on waltz perfection, measure 9/8, but the waltz itself, with full support on the strong beat, with a straight sharp pedal emphasizing the traditional 1 beat in the classical, "imperial" waltz appears as a reminiscence only in vv. 88-92.

The waltz "maturates", gains strength, unfolds, almost literary, let alone textured, dynamic, timbre. It does not just accumulate, but accumulates "meditatively", "rises" like dough, and, as a result, spurtles. The forthcoming waltz is a culmination. The culmination zone is highlighted with the waltz. What is primary for Rachmaninov? We can hardly explain whether J. Strauss inserted the waltz into the culmination zone, for example, *The Bat* Overture (there are, by the way, two culmination waltz zones), or the presence of the appearance of waltz determines the culmination in itself? Perhaps the tension increases with each motivic construction, reaches the highest point and is removed in measure 87. This is not about immature "tension-relaxation". This is anxiety, expectations, as it were: the listener is driven by the growth of anxiety, fear, beauty. The waltz dramatically gives the states of liberation and tranquility, "flying away", "melting", reigning to the last smooth note of the study picture. Rachmaninov built his own form, still unexplained, unexplored, which did not fit well-known standards until now.

It can be assumed that the idea of the work *Study-Picture №* 8 Op.39 and the monumental symphonic work *Symphonic Dances. Part II. Twilight* contained one grain of the

waltz, one method that reveals the meaning of the waltz after long developmental constructions, tonal and thematic transitions that came from a holistic seminal rhythm-thematic, as well as, apparently, a psychological-sensible context.

The elegy, Op. 3, № 1 in es-moll, was written by the composer at the age of 19, although Rachmaninov is a mature and wise author here. Like all of Rachmaninov's works, the music is primordially Russian, feeding on Russian roots, permeated with Russian intonation, and that is why it is beloved of all without exception. Sadness, which can only be expressed by Rachmaninov sounds, but not by words. Very tentatively, you can consider hints of perfection and the waltz in measure, for example, 10, where waltz perfection appears for the first time in the play, or rather, this is only a hint so far.

Then emotion, intonation appear. The waltz as such in the 4/4 time compositionally is not used by Rachmaninoff, although culmination zone in vv. 63-70 is the waltz. It is usually performed according to the reproduction of the melody and according to the ratio of vertical perspective and horizontal perspective. Traditionally, piano performance is based on the use of means of pronouncing the melody, as well as texture material horizontally. The vertical calls attention to itself while retaining the genre waltz tradition, a straight pedal and strict clarity, evenness are recommended, we would like to hear the absolute equality of the three-beat accompaniment and the two-beat melodic line performed.

The characteristics of performance and intonation: oratorical, confessional, mournfulpathetic, thoughtful-elegiac – reveal, according to A. Malinkovskaya, "the characteristic of the structure of sound utterance in the performance of a particular work ..., the interpretation of the style or a certain period of the composer's work" (MALINOVSKAYA, 2017).

Another example of the waltz in the culmination of Rachmaninov is the famous acting out in Romantic Song "Fragment from Musset", Op. 21, № 6, fis-moll.

The aesthetics of symbolism significantly influenced painting, music and Russian culture at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The music of the romantic song being the brightest in its tragedy is a kind of result of the impression of young Rachmaninov from the symbolist movement, which, according to, for example, K. Balmont had not Western European roots (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer), but Russian ones (F. Tyutchev, A. Fet, K. Fofanov, even A. Pushkin and M. Lermontov to some extent). The attention to symbolism in the literary and musical circles of the Silver Age, developing, drawing new forces into its channel, testifies to the national ground, to its certain roots in the spiritual culture of Russia. Obscure anxiety in poetry, music, in general, in art dictates the need for more refined ways of expressing feelings and thoughts. Both the poetry of the symbolists and the music of Rachmaninov meets this need, although he himself did not attribute himself to any movements, including expressionism and symbolism. K. Balmont's article describes some of the features of the poetry of the symbolists: a special language, rich in intonations, the ability to rouse a complex mood in the soul. "Symbolism, according to K. Balmont, is a powerful force that seeks to guess new combinations of thoughts, colors and sounds and often guesses them with special convincingness".

S. Rachmaninov is essentially a symbolist. For example, the famous Rachmaninov chord (h-d-eis-a), resolved into the tonic with a third at the top, symbolizes drama, emphasizes the intonation of tragic crying with hysteria, the horror of loneliness, numbness (my cell is empty). The presence of the Rachmaninov chord with a subsequent burst of emotions (piano performance) puts the Romantic Song "Fragment from Musset" on a par with his piano "hits" – Preludes cis-moll, g-moll, Second and Third Piano Concertos.

It is appropriate to talk about the waltz modality in Rachmaninov's compositions, i. e. the waltz is expected, it maturates in all spheres of musical structure, expressiveness, and therefore – in the sphere of musician's reading of the material. One might as well play the waltz "like a waltz", relying on a deep first beat, with a slightly delayed second and slightly drawn out third beat, i.e., with features of a jazz waltz, close to the late Rachmaninov, with a straight and clear waltz pedal, with love for the waltz tradition.

One might even "behave like a hooligan", according to A.V. Malinkovskaya, for example, introduce a waltz into the music as an impulse of Rachmaninov's elements and beauty, "play in the sphere of performing, refine the intonational imagination, play the waltz, prepare the waltz, ...", calculate culmination zones, introducing all the dramatic, dynamic and intonational lines into the waltz, "try to free the ear from the layers of the academic routine" and bring into the performance "the freedom and enjoyment of freedom, ease, both psychological and bodily motif, in order to involve the listener in the performing process through acting, intrigue, sinister "mephistocharacter", sacred shamanism etc. "What is this, if not a way of harmonizing being and consciousness – one's own and universal, a way of building bridges between antinomic things, connecting the worlds of the real and the ideal?" (MALINOVSKAYA, 2017).

Such an analysis carried out fragmentarily in the classroom with the students will allow them to hear and understand the composer in a new way, to approach the performance of his works in a different way: not just to "read a music text", but to express not only the author's thought, but also their own attitude to the work and propose "hearing" of music in their own interpretation.

## **Conclusion and Summary**

The work by S. Rachmaninov, according to A.V. Malinkovskaya, is a revelation (MALINOVSKAYA, 2017). And in accordance with M. M. Makovsky's opinion, in the revelation there is "a sentiment of joy, a sense of relief and ecstasy, a sense of peace and silence, consonant with the sound of a sea shell, a feeling of finding a single archaic body" (MAKOVSKY, 1996), and in music – a feeling of image penetration, the same feeling of finding a single archaic body, in this case "whirling-ecstasy", "synchronization of the rhythms of the Cosmos, oceanic waves, blood flow, bodily movement and breathing" (MAKOVSKY, 1996).

The investigation carried out makes for several conclusions:

- 1. The use of expressive means: melodic, texture, timbre, rhythm-tempo, register, both rational-empirical and emotional leads in the culminations of Rachmaninov's works to the waltz as an exponent of the most powerful and intimate composer's emotions
- 2. Waltz culminations are a powerful means of expression in the work by S. Rachmaninov, testifying to the emergence and development of his individual authoring perception of the world and its reflection in the original composer's manner.
- 3. Hermeneutic analysis of the musical text and the waltz in the culmination zones of Rakhmaninov's musical forms will help the students identify the main idea of the works and perform the music vividly and accurately, in accordance with the author's intention.
- 4. For a performer, an interpreter, an indication of the way of comprehension of the inner idea of music, a vision in the process of understanding Rachmaninov's spirituality, the waltz tradition from Glinka and Tchaikovsky through Rachmaninov to the music of the 20th century is a guarantee of careful and gentle dealing with a piece of musical art and competent individual interpretation.

The study enriched both the teacher and the students with a more subtle understanding of the composer's inner world, the ability to see the very composer behind the musical text, his soul and to choose the right style of performing, direct the performance in the right direction, filled with understanding and empathy.

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